

Dark secrets of foreign investment in Ethiopia and tears of the poor

By Nathnael Abate (Norway)

The rapid growth of world economy has resulted in strong partnership between countries, multinational companies and cooperates. This made the greatest gateway for international companies directly to involve in foreign investment process in the labor cheap countries. Since cheap labor forces produce very high profits. In most developing countries the priority of government is self-enrichment by all possible means but not fulfilling the interest of public. For sake of their own benefits both government and foreign cooperates increase the bond between them overtime. Eventually these foreign companies become the head masters of government because they nurture government with a lot of cash and the corrupted regimes are happy to have it in their pockets. Now the government is spokesman and servant of the companies or cooperatives rather than being the protectors of citizens. Cooperates controlled government will take all the measures against its own citizens in order to protect the interest and benefits of the foreign corporates, specially the dictator regimes such as the regime of Ethiopia

Foreign investment by itself has no adverse impact on any society as long as it does not harm or violate the interests and tradition of locals, indigenous and citizens of the country where the investment takes place. But in most cases foreign investments in developing countries have suppressive, exploitative and long lasting impacts on the lives of local people. For example, foreign investments are highly destroying lives of indigenous people in western and southern Ethiopia. The Government is forcibly displacing the indigenous communities from their ancestral lands in order to supply land for foreign and local investors. These areas were rapidly being converted into commercial agricultural investment centers. The government is depriving small scale farming, pastoralists, fishing grounds and

other life sustaining activities of indigenous people in the area.



The corrupted TPLF regime backed transnational cooperatives in Ethiopia indirectly confiscating the land and other natural resources that have been home and food source for indigenous community for thousands of years. Interlocked partnership among the regime of Ethiopia and transnational companies have no short or long term benefits to the local community or the country. Industrial and agricultural products produced by these firms will be exported to other countries and profits will be transferred to home of their origin. Money from land lease or sell, tax and other sort of shares will furnish the pockets of dictator juntas. It will not benefit by any means the local communities. There are also violent tactics used against the locals (including rapes, intimidation, murder, harassment) as well as lack of consultation, compensation, legal redress and derogation of national and international laws intended to protect indigenous and pastoralists communities' rights to own and use resources. In south Omo valley about 86% of land was occupied by the investors which used to be farming, hunting, fishing and grazing ground for natives. The successive Ethiopian regime has never cared for dark skinned Ethiopian indigenous people in south Omo valley and in Gambella (west Ethiopia) rather they were all referred as a second citizens and sub humans.

The selling and leasing of land that is home for native tribes in Gambella and South omo had severe consequences on locals. Many families were scattered searching for food, water and graze land and these interdependent tribes become

hopeless and helpless. In the name of investment hidden corruption chain has taken newest paths in Ethiopia since recent years. In this corruption chain some participated directly and others indirectly. For instance the fertilizer potash company called YARA which is owned by Norwegians gives about 30% of its profit to Ethiopian regime. The interplay between the Yara and the Ethiopian Regime is that, YARA supplies the fertilizer to the regime and Ethiopian Government force farmers to use the fertilizer and pay for it. If the farmer is not willing to use the fertilizer soon he loses his land. Improper use of fertilizer could permanently damage the soil and the current use of fertilizer in most part of Ethiopia is improper. Government only focuses on selling large quantity of fertilizer and gaining profit from it but not the future severe consequences.

The symbolic human right guardian western rich countries which are also political, economic and social partners of dictator regimes increased and continued their aid for further deterioration of poor lives. Western foreign aid budgets are used as a driving force of human right violations in Africa particularly in Ethiopia. This devastating hidden exploitative system is wiping out poor, indigenous people, local communities, peasants, pastoralists and is causing permanent damage to land and other natural environment in the area. For large scale agriculture wide area of forest is cleared and which in turn increases massive emission of Co2 in to local climate. In addition to forest clearing also Ethiopia regimes main strategy of renewable energy source what is so called hydroelectric dams ("Reservoirs [created by large dam projects] are a significant contributor to climate change, and that hydropower schemes in some cases may have a greater impact on global warming than fossil fuel power stations.") . In South Omo, Gilgil Gibe and some other parts of the country many people were displaced without any compensation from their homes and property for dams' construction. Research suggests that organic matter, decomposing vegetation and soil, in shallow reservoirs in warm tropical areas emits large amounts of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere and that even after the vegetation is fully decomposed, gases continue to be released. And yet hydro development is promoted as a 'green' alternative to fossil fuel.

The south and west Ethiopia natives are paying price for non-self-benefiting and biased development policy of the government. They are forcibly displaced from their ancestor's grave land or possessions. This people have very little employment room to be employed in newly introduced sectors and sometimes may have access to physical labor with very low payments and bad treatments .Those employed in the sector are from Tigray and other regions. These communities are plunged further into poverty, environments are destroyed and irreparable harm is caused to this indigenous community.

There are also many houses of poor and shelters being demolished and demolishing going on in bigger cities(In Addis Ababa and regional cities) to sell the land without compensation for those who owns the land or shelter on the place. According to the December 26, 2013 report of Zegabi, people whose houses got demolished in capital Addis Ababa said "They (government officials) did not even [allow] us enough time for [the] evacuation" with sorrow in their eyes and extreme fatigue on their face. "They immediately started to plow down all the houses with bulldozers for no consideration. All the houses turned into dust and rubble right there in front of our eyes. The place we used to call home was no more, a barren land in its place." I enquired if they were given prior notice of the demolition.



Their heartfelt and emotional answer was "They had told us that this place was

going to be removed and plowed down three or four months ago. But there was no legal notice. It was just word of the mouth. And we were always asking for places to be given to us. And the people at the concerned offices always said that at one time one of the officials wasn't around to decide or at another time the map for the place was not prepared. And now they are telling us to wait for our answers living outside. What kind of justice is that? There is no where we can apply to to get justice. The Sub city administration will not do anything for us and we have been trying to ask the Red Cross for help but it's all bureaucratic."

The land which is taken away either from the indigenous people of far rural area or poor of the cities will be sold to foreign investors or domestic riches. The money from selling and leasing land will be in the pockets of woyane officials to make their life joyful while leaving behind tears, sorrows, homelessness and poverty to the indigenous and poor people. They (our rulers) made us poor. We are crying and they are laughing.

Writer`s contact nathanieloret@gmail.com

Tweeter @nathysaint and facebook nathy de saint.

God bless Ethiopia